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ABSTRACT

The administrator's role in insuring off-campus program quality is considered. An essential difference between administrators and leaders is noted: administrators are status quo oriented, crisis oriented, reactive, and less flexible; leaders are change oriented, planning oriented, proactive, and less flexible. When such factors as new technology and fuel costs emphasize the need for new form of off-campus education, leadership qualities are important. Post hoc policy making, the norm in higher education in the past, is no longer acceptable. It is proposed that quality in education is determined by instruction, and the administrator has several roles to play in relation to maintaining instructional quality. Some of the roles may be conflicting. He must be (1) a traditionalist, a posture seen as central to the insurance of quality; (2) a heretic questioning instructional effectiveness; (3) a change agent; and (4) a cosmopolite, capable of thinking and acting beyond self-interest or interests represented professionally. It is concluded that there is room for more than one form of higher education in the United States: mass or elite, on- or off-campus, pure or applied, etc. However, the quality of off-campus programs may be essential to the survival of an institution, and an administrator with leadership skills can help to insure that quality. (MSE)

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THE ADMINISTRATOR'S ROLE IN INSURING QUALITY IN OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS*

In his recent book Side Effects, Woody Allen describes the current dilemma of administrators. We "face a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness, the other to total extinction. Let us pray that we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

The governor of our great state recently announced a three percent recision of the current year's operating budget, along with a projected reduction of four, seven, or nine percent for the following fiscal year to cope with an unexpected revenue shortfall. In explaining the reasons for his action, he dredged up an old "good news, bad news" story, the one about the leader of the lost expedition in the jungles of Africa. As the group, hopelessly lost, assembled at the beginning of another day, the leader announced: "The good news is that we have worms for breakfast. The bad news is there aren't enough to go around."

If these remarks suggest that I'm pessimistic about the future of off-campus programs, let me hasten to say that I am not. Our long range need for energy conversation, rapidly developing technology, and common sense dictate that we must expand, not curtail, our efforts to serve non-traditional students, often necessarily at non-traditional hours and places. Yes, expand even in the face of growing governmental regulation and interference in the administration of postsecondary education. Even if we are successful in

HE 013 285

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"cleaning up our own act," federal and state meddling will increase and there may even be beneficial side effects. However, while I'm well aware of the limitations of self-regulation, experience tells us that governmental agencies are more interested in "dividing up the turf," resulting in a leveling down or general mediocrity of programs. It will require a great deal of ingenuity on the part of administrators, working closely with faculty and outside agencies, to improve instructional quality while responding to the often irrelevant demands of increasing governmental oversight.

Before exploring what I think the administrator's role should be in insuring quality in off-campus programs, I would like to make two preliminary points. Think of these points as context for a consideration of the administrator's specific responsibilities. Another way of saying this is that my remarks today will be in two parts. In part one I rant and rave in more or less unchecked fashion. In part two I make a list. This is not to say I no longer rant and rave, but I do it under subtitles.

First, as a presenter who had the title of his address chosen for him, I will claim my right to take mild exception to the word "administrator." Some theorists have postulated a difference between "administrator" and "leader," both in terms of their organizational functions and their inherent capacities. Those of you familiar with such taxonomies will

recall that the qualities ascribed to leaders are invariably more flattering than those that describe more administrators. Administrators are status quo oriented. Leaders are change oriented. Administrators are crisis oriented and reactive. Leaders are planning oriented and proactive. Administrators are less flexible. Leaders are more flexible. Administrators are "localities." Leaders are "cosmopolites."

To call our attention to such a distinction is, I believe, more than a footnote to what we are here about today. Given the demographic shift to a new majority of student--an older, part-time student--, it has to be evident that what is happening is continuing higher education in the United States is in large part of what is happening in higher education, period. What has until now been the tail begins to wag the dog. In their study of lifelong learning in America, published by Jossey-Bass last year, Richard Peterson and associates remind us of the conclusion reached in 1971 by the UNESCO International Commission on the Development of Education: that lifelong learning should become the master concept for all of education. Arthur Chickering in a paper presented at the 1980 AAHE national conference also advances adult development as an organizing principle for higher education. Whether we do or don't buy this, we can scarcely ignore the demographics. Nor can we ignore several other things that virtually compel the development of more and better forms of non-traditional higher education. One is the unprecedented rate at which new technology is created and

adopted in the workplace, resulting in the need for constant occupational updating and retraining. Another is the price of gasoline, which does and will make off-campus access not just a convenience but a necessity.

And so, what does all this imply for the administration of non-traditional programs? To me it sounds as it we could use some visionaries, if that is what leaders are. It suggests we are at a juncture where a distinction between administrator and leader is almost unavoidable. I would guess that most of us prefer to think of ourselves as leaders, even conceding that, however, we slice it, there is a good deal of administration in leadership. What needs to be recognized, I think, is that while we continue to deliver higher education to non-traditional populations on and off-campus, at the same time we need to develop policies for this delivery, concepts and principles that inform our actions as opposed to unchallenged assumptions--intelligent policies that reflect the various realities of our higher education scene and which also give us ideals that can be translated into goals and directions. Up to now most so-called policy making for continuing higher education has been post hoc. Institutions have been too busy serving a rapidly burgeoning adult student market to do more in the realm of policy than hastily throw together statements describing what they are already doing. True policy formation needs leaders, administrators somewhat removed from the fray, perhaps, who have had full experience of the tress but who are also able to make out the forest.

Finally, I will observe that the effective leader needs more than vision. He or she also has a responsibility for creating the conditions that make implementation possible. One leadership theorist, T.O. Jacobs, sees effective leadership as successful social exchange, a transaction in which each participant is able to minimize costs and maximize benefits. Leadership, he says, is the ability to utilize interpersonal skills to move persons and groups toward goals while avoiding confrontations and interactions that make power or status differentials evident. This view of leadership, whether one entirely agrees with it, implies how much more complex leadership is than simply exercise of power. It also suggests just how challenging the continuing education administrator's task may be as he or she undertakes to develop productive relationships with representatives of other higher education interests, such as academic departments and even state agencies--relationships in which costs are minimized and benefits maximized despite ideological clashes and competition for finite resources.

I have been defining one of our terms, in effect, asking what do we mean by "administrator"? I nave also cunningly used the neutral act of term-defining to air several opinions. As a second consideration preliminary to looking at what the administrator does to insure quality off campus, I'd like to define another term and to ask, what do we mean by "quality"?

We mean several things by quality, of course, but what do we mostly mean? Is there a crux of the issue? Do we mean facilities? There is no question that some physical arrangements are more conducive to learning than others and that this in particular is an issue for off-campus programs. It is difficult to make generalizations, though, because off-campus courses and facilities are so various.

If we are talking about a collegiate foreign language class being held in a multi-purpose community recreation building, we can suppose than instruction may suffer from the lack of language lab equipment. On the other hand, an off-campus program might conceivably include a medical extension course conducted at a magnificent facility such as the American College of Cardiology's Heart House in Bethesda, Maryland. The "classroom" at Heart House features 70 chairs paid for by different private physicians, each of which is a self-contained, state-of-the-art, multi-media, interactive communications system. Can most public postsecondary medical schools hope to match such equipment in their regular on-campus facilities?

In general, we are talking about a "clean, well-lighted place" and, in general, we get it. Given that austerity is the present dominant theme of higher education and that many institutions defer maintenance as a means of cutting costs, we may begin to find more clean, well-lighted facilities off campus than on. And when we don't, we may want to remember

may begin to find more clean, well-lighted facilities off campus than on. And when we don't, we may want to remember that thousands of Americans had significant academic experiences in classrooms in Quonset huts in Vietnam while bombing raids were in progress a few miles away.

I have perhaps been dismissive in discussing the importance of facilities as an issue in quality, and with apologies to those who may see them as more vital, I again may seem dismissive on the subject of student support services and systems. My syllogism is that most participants in off-campus programs are adults; that most adults are sufficiently resourceful, experienced, and goal-oriented to seek out services not readily accessible; and that therefore the nature and availability of student services are important but not the most crucial issue in the quality of off-campus programs.

Three caveats, however, accompany this observation. First, the kind of academic advising and career counseling adult students need is clearly different from that appropriate for traditional college students. Viable off-campus programs, in part because they are off-campus, must provide the right kind of advising and make it as accessible as possible. Second, there are important policy issues in the area of admissions and record-keeping for non-traditional students. In particular there is a need to recognize the greater mobility of adults with practices such as those called for in the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges concept. Third, the

socioeconomically disadvantaged young and older people as a new clientele for postsecondary education in the coming decades. Where this potential student population is concerned--and I emphasize that it is potential at this point, since so far there exists no consensus among educators that collegiate education should concertedly extend itself to this clientele--my syllogism doesn't hold. For such students, outreach and special services, perhaps incuding remediation, would be a much more important element of off-campus programs.

What is at the heart of quality off-campus collegiate credit programs, I come finally to assert, is instruction--as somewhat narrowly defined to mean: who teaches, what they teach, and how they teach. Here I begin making the promised list. The administrator has not one but several roles, I believe, some of which may even seem to contradict each other. At the very least, the administrator must serve the functions of traditionalist, heretic, change agent, watchdog, and "cosmopolite."

I hope that I may be forgiven for not addressing myself directly to the question of which model of administrative organization best serves the requirements of high quality in off-campus programs. That question does not go unaddressed in recent literature. At last year's Atlanta meeting, Dr. William Turner of North Carolina State presented a convincing case for the greater effectiveness of a departmentally decentralized but institutionally integrated approach. At my

own institution nearly all continuing education, including off-campus offerings, is delivered by our University College, a separate campus of the University of Maryland whose mandate is to serve part-time students, and we consider ours a successful approach. Rather than debate the merits of different models, I'd like to offer some thoughts on the role of the continuing education administrator that will pertain whether the administrator represents an academic department or an extension division.

The Administrator as Traditionalist

I discuss this role first because no other is so central to the insurance of quality. The academic content of a course or curriculum and the acceptability of an instructor's qualifications can be determined by no one but those knowledgeable in the given scholarly field, namely the faculty of academic departments. Likewise, standards for satisfactory level of student mastery must be the same on campus and off. This integrity of off-campus programs doesn't necessarily happen automatically and in fact is sometimes a hassle. Controls and procedures must be developed. The procedures must be constantly monitored and fine-tuned. Huge amounts of paperwork are generated in the process. But the mostly cumbersome relationship between course developer and course deliverer is all important. If an industrial concern approaches a university extension unit with a request to develop a certain academic course not listed in the

university's catalog that will be delivered to a guaranteed "class" of 145 middle managers on site, the extension unit's only response can be that it will attempt to facilitate the development and staffing of the course through appropriate academic channels. If the industry representative's reply is that there isn't time to wait for these machinations, the continuing education administrator's only response can be to bite the bullet. Hopefully the insurance of quality is seldom this painful. Dr. Turner in his presentation, included in Volume III of Issues in Higher Education, in addition to describing specific quality assurance mechanisms, recommends six principles that may be followed to insure the comparability of on-campus and off-campus courses. I would refer you to them.

The Administrator as Heretic

Having established his or her credibility as a protector of academic process, the continuing education administrator must turn around and risk some of it by meddling in pedagogy. What is taught is the clear responsibility of academic departments. How it is taught can be a responsibility of the administrator, who also has certain principles to protect, at any rate until academics become more sensitized to the needs of adult learners. Adults make demanding students, and not all professors can teach them effectively. For example, an extended presentation of theory in the form of a lecture might be for the most part silently, respectfully noted down by a

class of 20-year-olds, who are experiential clean slates, so to speak. A class of adults, on the other hand, might interrupt several times to draw relationships between the theory and its application in their own experiences and even perhaps to question the efficacy of the theory. How the professor responds is critical. If the student inquiry is welcomed, the professor is likely to be, or to be capable of being, a good teacher of adult students. If however such student interruptions are resented, are thought to be presumptuous, the professor outstanding as a scholar may not develop into an effective instructor of adults.

Another example is found in the popular practice of inviting practitioners in occupational fields to address a class and give students a glimpse of "what it's like out there." Earlier this year I talked with an instructor who had taught an off-campus course for the first time and confessed her chagrin at having invited such a guest lecturer to her sociology class, only to learn later that the career experiences of several of the students were equivalent to or more extensive than those of the guest presenter.

What I am suggesting is that, to insure instruction of high quality, the continuing education administrator has a responsibility to insist that academically qualified instructors also be attitudinally, pedagogically qualified to teach adults. At University of Maryland University College we have a fairly comprehensive faculty development program that

includes workshops whose content ranges from consciousness raising to teaching methodology, routine peer or administrator classroom visits to faculty teaching for the first time, and mandatory written student course evaluation at the end of each course taught by each of our (several hundred) faculty. Our position is that no one action taken to insure instructional quality is going to be adequate, but that a combination of several is getting there.

The Administrator as Change Agent

It needs to be recognized that certain environmental/ organizational conditions must exist if off-campus programs are to be of high quality. Where they do not exist, a continuing education administrator has the responsibility to try to bring them about. Does the published mission of the institution explicitly include continuing education? Does the continuing education administrator have sufficient voice in the highest level decision making of the institution? Do the institution's faculty promotion and retention policies specifically recognize and reward teaching non-traditional students?

Let me dwell on this last one for a moment. Most often, the answer is no, and I would single out this issue as one of the greatest challenges facing higher education in the '80s. We cannot, I believe, insure the quality of off-campus courses without involving academic faculty more vitally. Yet the

incentives for teaching non-traditional students presently are not there for traditional faculty at most institutions.

Recognizing this substantial difficulty, many collegiate continuing education units, mine included, have made a point of playing up the professional-practitioner credentials, the "relevant experience" credentials, of their largely adjunct faculty. While it is true that many highly credible practitioners are recruited to teach academic course to non-traditional and traditional students, it is also true that many off-campus courses, particularly in the "soft" subjects, are staffed with academics who make a relatively meager living by teaching on an adjunct basis at as many as three institutions in a given semester. In our austere era with its greatly diminished likelihood of faculty tenure in many disciplines, instructor exploitation and its implications for quality are growing problems. Institutions save money by hiring multiple part-timers against a single full-time faculty budget line. But what kind of quality can be assured when an instructor is so busy teaching that he or she has litle time for scholarly development and updating?

In our massive, if informal, file of anecdotes about teaching overseas for the University of Maryland, one comes to mind. It asks you to visualize a professor greatly bundled up for sub-zero weather, standing with a few official others on a deserted frozen patch of ground in Newfoundland, gaze directed skyward as he awaits an airplane that will not stop but will

fly low enough to parachute drop critically needed supplies for this very isolated military installation: food, medicine, . . . and textbooks for a University of Maryland course. It is this kind of commitment and involvement I'm talking about.

Finally, continuing education administrators, by virtue of their position on the relative periphery of the more traditional processes of institutions, often have the advantage of being the first to greet the future as it marches towards us. In conducting off-campus courses, continuing education administrators have been among the first to feel the effects of an enhanced state regulatory role. They also are accountable to the federal government. Perhaps, having lived longer with certain grim facts of life, the continuing education administrator has a change agent responsibility to alert the rest of the institution to what's up.

The eyes of the accrediting world, for example, are currently on the State of Maryland, where a nationally unprecented agreement between the State Board for Higher Education and the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association will see joint and coordinated evaluations of Maryland postsecondary institutions. Possibly the considerable costs and unwieldiness of this tandem arrangement, or some even worse form of duplication, could have been avoided if someone had suggested to the decision makers that the state presence is coming to stay and that we ought to seek lower cost ways to live with it. One extreme

strategy for neutralizing the whole state evaluation impetus would be to recommend to the Middle States Commission that it invite a State Board staff member to serve on each evaluation team. Continuing education administrators have found it more possible to "be realistic" than those inside the ivy-covered walls. Non-traditional programs, even credit ones, are often financially self-supporting. Continuing education administrators also are frequently, by default, cast as conciliators in turf disputes between town and gown.

The Administrator as Cosmopolite

A theorist named Gouldner coined the terms "cosmopolite" and "localite," and bending them somewhat to my own purpose, I find these terms a succinct way of rendering a fairly subtle characterization. Cosmopolites, I've decided, are administrators capable of thinking and acting beyond their own self interest or the interest they professionally represent. Because the current issues for continuing higher education are the issues for all of higher education, we need cosmopolites throughout the institution--from the president's office to the academic department to the continuing education unit. Continuing education administrators, having been so embattled and even shunned over the years, are especially apt to think they have no stake or responsibility in the problems of the total institution. This is ironic if we consider that non-traditional students are to become higher education's primary clientele. Granted the insights we have had that, too

often, we couldn't get anyone to listen to, still continuing education has never had the right or the ability to secede from the rest of the institution, and it has never been more important than now that we be vitally involved.

In calling for a cosmopolite perspective, I ask that we not oversimplify, that we not get too feverish in the grinding of our own particular axe, that we not be defensive and paranoid, that we not jerk our knee in place of thinking, that we not lose the capacity for fine discernment--that we not, for example, confuse institutional autonomy with academic freedom or quantity with quality.

Many of us who won't be voting for Ronald Reagan next week do nevertheless applaud his early campaign pledge to "get the federal government out of the classroom." Should we stop and think about what it is, exactly, we are advocating? Are we against social justice? That is the major federal role. Do we perhaps favor a return to segregation if that's what a given public institution wants? No, of course not, we say, but it's not that simple. Precisely. It is not the federal role altogether we object to but rather the enactment of oversimplified laws to address complex problems. Equal opportunity and affirmative action requirements do have myriad implications for overall institutional quality. The recent affirmative action case at the University of Georgia illustrates how difficult it can be to know what is right or wrong for the institution. I have listened to colleagues

eloquently support Dinnan's position and to others just as convincingly defend Blaubergs'. Maybe, politics being what they are, the federal government won't, can't listen--it's too amorphous and nobody knows exactly how to locate its brain or its ear--but have we tried very hard to communicate? Have we taken individual responsibility--or have we left it to the professional lobbyists who "know all about that stuff"?

Nor should we be reactionary about the new state role. Distasteful though it is, it may as I've suggested have beneficial side effects. Possibly state agency pressure brought to bear on the Department of Defense will, for example, accomplish more to professionalize military education services than regional accrediting associations have been able to.

This is by no means to say that institutions should throw up their hands and let themselves be run by the state. At the risk of optimism, I'd like to suppose that higher education in America is just now in the act of regaining its balance following the full and awful realization that it had, somewhere along the line, abdicated responsibility for itself and that, lo and behold, there were other interests with the audacity to think they could take up the reins. Higher education's loss of mystique began even before its students came to include returning veterans. Though I'm not a tennis player, I once heard a sports commentator remark that one of the most satisfying winning shots in the game, especially in

fast-paced men's professional tennis, occurs when a player has out-anticipated his opponent. The player with the ball coming to him has caught an almost imperceptible clue that his opponent anticipates he will place the ball in the righthand corner of the court. So instead he places it in the lefthand corner. Ironically, the opponent who loses the point was within reach of the ball--but he had already committed his whole body and momentum to the opposite direction and couldn't turn around fast enough.

Higher education has been out-anticipated, I think. Continuing education excepted perhaps, we've been myopically focused on what occurs within the institution and we've been too ready to ignore the outside forces that have the now realized potential to affect us, whether legitimately or not. We didn't fully perceive til recently that resources really are limited, that program planning is a fiscal act, and that we must plan or be planned for. As in tennis, timing is everything. We must hand the state our agenda before the state has a chance to give us theirs. We've lost important points, but not necessarily the "match."

At our crisis stage in higher education, the cosmopolite academic department chair, rather than deplore off-campus programs as a siphon to the credibility of the institution or dismiss them as irrelevant, will decide that the department must do more to insure the necessary quality. The cosmopolite continuing education administrator in turn will not be too

proud to approach the department, when needed, to bring about its greater involvement in off-campus programs. Many have suggested that the department chair and the continuing education administrator have between them a single potential solution to each other's separate problems. Given the declining numbers of traditional students and thus fewer on-campus classes for (tenured?) permanent full-time faculty who must be paid whether there are classes or not, an alternative often posed is to assign faculty to evening and off-campus courses as part of regular teaching load. I would add and emphasize: so long as the faculty are qualified.

I have been talking mostly about off-campus instruction that is the same as that conducted on campus, only in a different setting. Before closing I want to recognize that not all off-campus credit instruction can be so described. There are instances in which market demand, setting, and facilities dictate course and curriculum content. This is not to say the role of the academic department has been circumvented but only to acknowledge that the initiative development of a course may have come from outside the institution and yet not be incompatible with its mission.

One positive contribution of state planning, whether we always agree with our "assignments," has been to more clearly delineate various segments of higher education within the public and private sectors. With some overlap appropriate, community colleges exist to do essentially one thing, four

year state colleges another, and research universities yet another. We're not sure whether this delineation is good or bad for us, but it's something of a relief to have it recognized.

Many of you are familiar with the work of Martin Trow in looking at how the European university took root and developed in the United States. Trow finds a transition over two centuries from elite to mass to what he terms universal access higher education and notes one interesting outcome in this progress. While it was assumed for a time that the transition from elite to mass higher education in America would result in elite higher education being swallowed up and replaced by mass, this did not occur. What has happened instead is that mass higher education has jettisoned the less than excellent students elite institutions might otherwise have been forced to admit, resulting in a preservation of the elite institution's eliteness. So far there have been sufficient students and resources for the two to co-exist. Nor does universal access higher education appear to be displacing mass or elite. Trow did predict, however, that the transition from mass to universal access will have backlash in a proliferation of agencies governing higher education.

A conclusion that might be drawn is that there is room for more than one form of higher education in America: it can be mass or elite, on-campus or off-campus, pure or applied, etc. Maybe an overarching goal of all of higher education

should be to insure that this pluralism continues to be the case.

It would be embarrassing to end by admitting that one's lengthy remarks can be boiled down to one or two sentences. But let me leave you with what I consider to be two of the thoughts that warrant further thinking about how to implement. The first is that the issue of quality in off-campus programs is also the issue of the quality, and maybe even the survival, of the postsecondary institution itself. The second is that the future of off-campus programs needs administrators who play many roles and especially that of leader. Let us hope it is not a "lost expedition" we are leading. Let us pray that we do have the wisdom. And the wherewithal.